FATHOM
a French e-journal of Thomas Hardy studies

5 | 2018
Desire and the Expressive Eye

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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/fathom/817
DOI: 10.4000/fathom.817
ISSN: 2270-6798

Publisher
Association française sur les études sur Thomas Hardy

Electronic reference
Fabienne Gaspari, « "Their glances met": Looks and Desire in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* », *FATHOM* [Online], 5 | 2018, Online since 22 April 2018, connection on 04 May 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/fathom/817 ; DOI : 10.4000/fathom.817

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This article is being published jointly by FATHOM and the *Hardy Review* as part of a collaborative work.

1 The association between distance and desire in Thomas Hardy's work has often been noticed and in his study *Distance and Desire*, J. Hillis Miller has defined these two terms as two "outlining threads", "distance as the source of desire and desire as the energy behind attempts to turn distance into closeness" (Miller xii). Relationships are built on the interplay between distance and desire, illustrated by the "dance of desire" (144) or "circulation of mutually fascinated characters around one another, in a graceful dance of crossings and exchanges" (145). Hardy was "fascinated by the theme of fascination" (73) and this interweaving of distance and desire involves the gaze, which has a central function in the creation and circulation of desire between the characters. A "nightmare of frustrated desire" for Miller (178), a novel about couples being formed then broken, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* focuses on ways of seeing, exploring how they can be related to the intricate dance in which the characters participate. We will see how first encounters enable Hardy to stage the initial exchange of glances leading to fascination and thus to establish the connection between desire and the eye. We will then study how he introduces the power of the gaze of those who watch from a distance and trace signs of desire in looks and faces. Yet Hardy's exploration of ways of seeing is not limited to visual exchanges in the story, we will therefore show that the association between desire and the gaze is also characteristic of the narrative mode itself, of its desire for the visible and of its emphasis on pictorial elements. Finally, this image-making process that runs

through the text will lead us to examine the function of windows as frames and mediators of desire articulating accessibility and inaccessibility.

"Their glances met": first encounters

2 If, as J. Hillis Miller writes, "the drama of fascination begins with a look" (Miller 119), it seems relevant to show how first encounters are narrated in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by focusing on three scenes that introduce these meetings. They foreground the fundamental function of the gaze in the creation of fascination and of the intricate "system of looks" (119) ruling the "dance of desire" in this novel. The first scene takes place between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae and what is interesting here is how Hardy conveys the sense of the young woman's incipient desire through the description of Farfrae's face. The encounter occurs in chapter 7, at the Three Mariners, the inn where Farfrae has taken a room and where Susan Newson/Henchard and her daughter are staying. Working as a maid to pay for their board and lodging, Elizabeth-Jane goes up to the young man's room to bring him a tray for his supper and gets a full view of him. The picture that is then made of Farfrae has to be contrasted with the first glimpse, caught in the previous chapter, of a man "ruddy and of a fair countenance, bright-eyed, and slight in build" (Hardy 1977, 29):

> He was now idly reading a **c**opy of the lo**c**al paper, and was hardly **c**onscious of her entry, so that she loo**k**ed at him **q**uite **c**oolly, and saw how his forehead shone where the light **c**aught it, and how nicely his hair was **c**ut, and the sort of velvet pile or down that was on the s**k**in at the ba**ck** of his ne**ck**, and how his chee**k** was so truly **c**urved as to be part of a globe, and how **c**learly drawn where the lids and lashes which hid his bent eyes (Hardy 1977, 34).

3 It is clear that Elizabeth-Jane's fascination starts to be expressed here: the fragmentary perception made of close ups on certain elements (effects of light on Farfrae's forehead, the down on the nape of his neck, the curve of his cheek) reveals it and somehow transfigures the person described if we compare it to the first description in chapter 6. This portrait cannot be considered as factual or realistic, for it selects unexpected details and leaves out many other features. What prevails is the impression that the description is as much about the sensations of the focalizer as about the object of the gaze. Elizabeth-Jane's involvement (sensual and emotional) in the act of seeing and her great appreciation of the sight that is offered can be easily traceable in the adverbs and marks of emphasis or intensifiers that punctuate the passage ("how nicely", "so truly", "how clearly drawn") and in the enumeration, accumulation and rhythm created by the repetition of "and", "how" and of the consonant [k] (see bold characters in the quotation). Farfrae is reading and this immobility turns him into an object that can be gazed at. The creation of a frozen moment framed inside a single paragraph and almost suspended in time, starting when Elizabeth enters the room and ending when she moves and sets down the tray, gives a pictorial quality to the scene. The mention of curved lines, of light and of "drawn" lids and lashes adds a graphic quality and suggests a pictorial approach.

4 The next first encounter that illustrates the theme of fascination involves Elizabeth-Jane again and Lucetta, who is to become a rival and vie with her for Farfrae's love but also for the affection of her stepfather, Henchard. The two women come across each other in a churchyard, near Susan's grave, and the encounter is viewed from Elizabeth-Jane's eyes.

As with Farfrae, the passage focusing on Lucetta is clearly more about the observer's impressions than about what is seen. The vision she has of Lucetta is a mix of curiosity, of a sense of the uncanny and of surprise (not to say shock) that could be related to a nascent fascination: "she allowed herself the pleasure of feeling fascinated" (Hardy 1977, 103). Lucetta, who is to become "the lady of her fancy" (112), appears as "her wraith or double" (102) in mourning too and about her age and size. However, the beauty of her dress causes the observer's eyes to be "arrested by the artistic perfection of the lady's appearance" (103). Beyond its taking place in a graveyard, the encounter is gothic as regards its impact, since this double seems to steal from the observer her "freshness and grace" (103). For Jane Thomas, the device of doubling employed here has to be interpreted in terms of the young woman's desire, as Lucetta "represents an elevated and gentrified image of herself" (Thomas 2013a, 48). The sense of loss felt by Elizabeth-Jane foreshadows her being cast in the role of an observer, receding in the background, displaced or even erased by Lucetta who finds herself centre stage and becomes an object of desire.

5 Last but not least, another first meeting is characterized by an emphasis on looks suggesting the first tremors of desire detected through a close attention to facial expressions, more particularly to blushing. When Farfrae pays a visit to Elizabeth-Jane who is staying at Lucetta's, Elizabeth-Jane is away and he becomes acquainted with the other woman. Visual exchanges and their effects punctuate a long dialogue: "Lucetta regarded him with a critical interest. He was quite a new type of person to her. At last his eye fell upon the lady's and their glances met" (Hardy 1977, 122). The fleeting effects that these looks have, such as blushing for both Lucetta "colouring a shade" (122) and Farfrae "who showed the modest pink" (122), are evoked. When the man leaves the house, it becomes manifest that he is aware of Lucetta's eyes following him and the result of this interview is that Elizabeth-Jane has indeed been displaced and replaced by Lucetta and that Henchard – who was the person Lucetta expected – has also lost his place. These scenes are instances of the importance of looks on at least three levels: the glances that meet are the starting point of a "drama of fascination" between the characters; visual exchanges are part and parcel of the construction of relationships by the narrative; the narrator's own gaze is foregrounded through its close attention to manifestations of desire such as blushing, through the pictorial dimension and play with focalisation, as in the depiction of Farfrae from Elizabeth-Jane's point of view.

6 These three levels stage the workings of the eye in connection with manifestations of desire. The narrator therefore recurrently mentions looks in order to relate the process that leads the characters to fall in love (or not) and to chart the ups and downs of their relationships. If he underlines that Farfrae is first interested in Elizabeth-Jane ("[his] gaze [...] was now attracted by the Mayor's so-called stepdaughter" [Hardy 1977, 73]), he also shows how Elizabeth-Jane strives to create this attraction, or rather to recreate "a fleeting love at first sight" (85) that Farfrae may have felt on a previous evening when she danced with him. She attempts to do so by wearing the same clothes, checking in the mirror to see if it works: "The picture glassed back was, in her opinion, precisely of such a kind as to inspire that fleeting regard, and no more" (86). "Regard" means attention but also look, or gaze. Elizabeth is acutely aware of the ephemeral nature of the desire that her appearance might trigger. The fleeting regard she elicits from Farfrae is not enough to turn her into a lasting source of attraction and to prevent her erasure and invisibility.

"Watching from a distance", reading gazes and faces

7 Elizabeth-Jane becomes an observer, one of "those watchers from a distance" (like Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*) as J. Hillis Miller calls them: "[Hardy] frequently presents a scene in which one character sees another without being seen, watches from an upper window or a hill, peeks in a window from outside at night, or covertly studies a reflection in a mirror" (Miller 7). From the moment her mother and herself arrive in Casterbridge, she is shown as an onlooker, seeing without being seen and first observing the uses of the place through her "unpractised eyes" (Hardy 1977, 48), but little by little exercising and perfecting her powers of observation and analysis. This is how for example "her quiet eye discern[s]" (69) the almost excessive affection that Henchard feels for Farfrae and later the tensions between them. Elizabeth-Jane is a great reader, of books and looks, she deciphers faces, whose "lines and folds" are like "verbal inscriptions" (83). The looks that are exchanged between the characters are under her close scrutiny (and that of Henchard who, after Lucetta's death, spies on her and Farfrae, telescope in hand). As Annie Ramel shows, the metaphor of reading and of the visage as a printed page, the presence of "intextuated" bodies and "the deciphering of the Real of human bodies, an uncovering of the mysteries of origin, death, or sexuality" (Ramel 1998, 269) are central here and encompass issues of origins, past secrets, and potential revelation. We find here an illustration of what William A. Cohen, studying Hardy's "material account of perception and interiority in his portrayal of the human face", defines as "the multiple functions of the face, as a screen onto which thoughts and feelings are projected and as a physiological receptacle for sensory encounters with the world" (Cohen 438).

8 There are in the novel many secrets that lie buried beneath the surface and often come close to being revealed, both through disguised confessions and through facial expressions. Duplicating the complexity of visual exchanges, Hardy creates an elaborate pattern of embedded storytelling with Lucetta and Henchard using a narrative trick, an anonymous "he" and "she", to tell the story of their past connection. Henchard repeats and resumes his tale three times in chapters 12, 26 and 34 where he reads to Farfrae letters addressed to himself by a woman (in fact Lucetta, now Farfrae's wife). Relationships are constructed on a triangular basis implying secrets and rivalry and on a "system of looks" articulating the ebb and flow of desire. One may first evoke the complex plot built on issues of filiation, with the triangular relation between Elizabeth-Jane and her two fathers, Newson and Henchard who "glance[s] in her face" (Hardy 1977, 52) and wonders why her hair is now light brown while it promised to be black. The secret of her lineage is brought to light by Susan's letter, a deathbed confession, and Newson's paternity is soon confirmed upon Henchard's close inspection of the sleeping girl's face. This exploration of features in order to establish genealogical facts might be regarded as emblematic of more specific instances in which it is Elizabeth who, rather than a mere spectator, is a kind of investigator intent on discovering truths and detecting manifestations of desire.

9 As for the second secret, the past relationship between Lucetta and Henchard, it lies at the heart of the triangle formed by Lucetta, Henchard and Farfrae, but neither Elizabeth-Jane nor Farfrae first know about it, though many signs point to it. One particular scene reveals a few elements which lead the young woman to keep a wary eye on her companions' visual exchanges and facial expressions. As the two women have left their

vantage point – the windows through which they observe market scenes – to go and look at a new bright-red agricultural machine gathering a fascinated crowd, it seems that Lucetta, attired in a bright-red dress, becomes another focus, the "cherry-coloured person" (Hardy 1977, 127) that "alone rival[s] it in colour" (128). Elizabeth-Jane witnesses a strange scene that leads her to believe that Lucetta and Henchard, whom she has just introduced to each other, are in fact already acquainted: "Then something seemed to occur which his stepdaughter fancied must really be a hallucination of hers. A murmur apparently came from Henchard's lips in which she detected the words, 'You refused to see me!' reproachfully addressed to Lucetta" (129). Similarly, Elizabeth-Jane begins to look for clues that reveal Lucetta's growing interest in Farfrae, like a "fact", "printed large all over Lucetta's cheeks and eyes to any one who could read her as Elizabeth-Jane was beginning to do" (131). Farfrae's next visit highlights the "supersession" of Henchard (133) and the parallel exclusion of Elizabeth from the circle formed by Lucetta and Farfrae. She is now invisible to Farfrae who seems "not to see her at all" (133) and she becomes "like an awkward third point which that circle would not touch" (134). The emphasis on this invisibility turns the young woman into a kind of "seer" (131), "surveying the position of Lucetta between her two lovers from the crystalline sphere of a straightforward mind" (137).

10 In a scene in chapter 26, the blindness of the two men, who know nothing of each other's connection with Lucetta yet feel latent tensions and are both fascinated by her, is exposed. Dramatic irony climaxes in the representation of a dinner scene that, to the narrator's eyes, looks like a Tuscan painting of the supper at Emmaus:

> They **s**a**t** **s**tiffly **s**i**d**e by **s**i**d**e a**t** the **d**arkening **t**able, like **s**ome **T**uscan pain**t**ing of the **t**wo **d**i**sc**iples **s**upping a**t** Emmau**s**. Lucetta, forming the third and haloed figure, was opposite them; Elizabeth-Jane, being out of the game, and out of the group, could observe all from afar, like the evangelist who had to write it down: that there were long **s**pa**c**e**s** of **t**a**c**i**t**urni**t**y, when all ex**t**erior **c**ircum**st**an**c**e was **s**ub**d**ue**d** **t**o the **t**ouch of **s**poon**s** and china, the click of a heel on the pavement under the **w**indow, the passing of a **w**heelbarrow or cart, the **w**histling of the carter, the gush of **w**ater into householders' buckets at the town-pump opposite; the exchange of greetings among their neighbours, and the rattle of the yokes by which they carried off their evening supply. (Hardy 1977, 139)

11 The iconic reference is an ironic reinterpretation of the love triangle which Hardy rearranges visually, playing with light and darkness and turning Lucetta into the resurrected figure of Jesus Christ surrounded by a halo and Henchard and Farfrae into the two disciples, while Elizabeth-Jane becomes the evangelist, the witness in the picture but on the margin, at a distance from the central scene, herself a projection of the narrator/painter. The bread broken by Henchard and Farfrae as they pick the same slice might be seen as the ironical outcome of their rivalry, the bread or Christ/Lucetta's body being figuratively torn and in that case not shared but eventually destroyed.

12 That Hardy is a "highly visual author" has been demonstrated by Jane Thomas in "Hardy and the Visual Arts" (Thomas 2013b, 436), and in this passage the writer's pictorialism serves his purpose which is "subtly to communicate visual effects, ideas, sentiments and emotions" (437). Hardy adds a sonorous dimension to this ironic visual rendering of tensions between lovers and future rivals, of a crisis conveyed through a moment of stasis and visually encapsulated inside the frame of a paragraph (like the description of Farfrae in chapter 7). He somehow unfreezes the picture by mentioning silence and the sounds that seem to break it. Yet the wealth of auditory sensations coming from the streets and

from the text itself (with, for instance, the alliterations in [s], [t] and [d] and then in [w] – see bold characters in the quotation) rather seems to increase the force of the silence inside that feeds latent tensions. What Annie Ramel calls the silent voice and the haunting musicality of the text, "*la voix silencieuse du texte*", "*la musicalité lancinante du texte*" (Ramel 2009, 279-280), are representative of Hardy's "fascination for muffled sounds, for a delicately-poised state of quasi audibility" (Ramel 2015, 164) and of the connection between gaze and voice that appear as "inextricably entwined" (167).

Writing and the desire for the visible

13 The narrator's extreme attention to looks and to the pictorial potential of some scenes introduces another characteristic of Hardy's play with the gaze: far from being limited to a means to express desire between the characters in the story, it is a complex force felt and conveyed on the level of the narrative. It shapes Hardy's writing that is in some passages of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* saturated with pictorial terms and characterized by "a proliferation of visual detail" which testifies to an "unwavering attention to the significance of observed phenomena" (Bullen 140). This phenomenon is not limited to "interpictoriality" (Louvel 66), that is to say "a direct citational effect" (89) due to the few direct references to painters or schools of painting found in this novel (Titian, Correggio, Tuscan painting). An aspiration to the visual, a longing to create images, seems to run through the writing in which the pictorial markers identified by Liliane Louvel in *Poetics of the Iconotext* (a technical vocabulary, framing effets, focalization, -ing forms and a suspension of movement) (90) are to be found. Here desire in its close association with the eye is manifested in the text that "strives towards its being-an-image without ever achieving it" (90). In the words of Edward Said, writing "can desire and, in a manner of speaking, move towards the visible" (quoted in Louvel 90).

14 As Jane Thomas shows, this pictorialism is part of an artistic practise based on selecting, editing and ordering so as to reveal signifying patterns and to reach deeper truth. It corresponds to the vision of the artist as a seer. Connecting Hardy with Ruskin, J. B. Bullen's definition of the "unconscious" Hardy as "the watcher, the observer, the recorder of impressions", as opposed to the "conscious" Hardy or polemicist (Bullen 4), underlines the centrality of the visual dimension. J. Hillis Miller explains that Hardy strove to remain "invisible, untouchable, a disembodied presence able to be seen without being seen or felt" (Miller 55), a fact which is linked with his tendency to see things as "a spectacle viewed from the outside" (4). However, Miller, still focusing on the interplay between distance and desire, defines this way of seeing as "double", not only a combination of the narrator's and of the character's perspectives but also "a superimposition of the small and the large" (50), varying from bird's eye views to close-ups.

15 The first pages which combine descriptions of the landscape and of the characters are particularly relevant for a discussion of the workings of the gaze (and its inseparability from the voice) and of Hardy's pictorialism:

> The man was of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect; and he showed in profile a facial angle so slightly inclined as to be almost perpendicular. [...]
> What was really particular, however, in this couple's progress, and would have attracted the attention of any casual observer otherwise disposed to overlook them, was the perfect silence they preserved. They walked side by side in such a way as to suggest afar off the low, easy, confidential chat of people full of reciprocity; but on

> closer view it could be discerned that the man was reading, or pretending to read, a ballad sheet [...].
> The chief – almost the only attraction of the young woman's face was its mobility. When she looked down sideways to the girl she became pretty, and even handsome, particularly that in the action her features caught slantwise the rays of the strongly coloured sun, which made transparencies of her eyelids and nostrils and set fire on her lips. (Hardy 1977, 3)

16 It seems that, beyond making a description of the surroundings, the narrator aims at underlining the difference between two orders of perception: the characters' blindness, which might be equated with Henchard's limitations and the characters' isolation from each other and from their own surroundings, is contrasted with the superior powers of the narrative gaze and its acute rendering of impressions, both visual and auditory. The narrator adopts the position of an observer first attracted by the silence between the walking couple. This association between sight and hearing is interesting in so far as, from the very first words of the novel, it makes the workings of the gaze and the question of perception problematic. In a somewhat paradoxical way, it is their silence which renders the characters conspicuous and therefore visible and which transforms the initial inattention of a "casual observer" into a close inspection. What is related here is first and foremost the emergence of the gaze presented as a prerequisite and as a justification for the description of the characters.

17 Furthermore, the perceptions of this eye are right from the start constructed on the doubleness defined by Miller, this combination of distance and proximity so essential to an understanding of Hardy's treatment of the gaze. They are based on the redefinition of the impression of reciprocity between the couple seen from a distance into a feeling of estrangement when viewed closely. The organisation of the portrait of the silent couple mirrors these tensions: we see first the husband, then the wife and between these descriptive parts, the silence between them is mentioned. Henchard's pretence of reading (probably for him a means of not communicating with his wife by look or word), is an occupation that isolates him from his companion. Jean-Jacques Lecercle's study of "Thomas Hardy's silences" mentions five types or "gradients" of silence, and it seems that in this passage two of them are present: the first, a linguistic gradient "that is sheer lack of speech, which means a lack of communication and shared meaning, the silence of *infantia*" (Lecercle § 5) and the fourth, a narrative gradient, the world "created, wrested out of the silence of inexistence to which it returns" (§ 9). These two forms of silence are used to stage the visual emergence of this world and of the narrative gaze.

18 The description of Henchard's and Susan's faces has multiple functions: it is symbolic more than realistic, programmatic (he has in a way already cast her off, which he will soon do by selling her to a stranger) and aesthetic. Hardy seems to use one technique to express Henchard's harshness and another to suggest Susan's vulnerability: the geometric drawing, harsh angles and lines of the man's face (the facial angle seems to be prolonged by the knife protruding from the basket that he carries on his back) are contrasted with the mobility of the woman's face, with the rendering of the effects of sunlight on eyelids and nostrils (made transparent) and lips (of a vivid red), effects that could be defined as impressionistic. Neither "the reader" Henchard nor Susan with "her eyes fixed ahead" look at the landscape which is described through references to what it is not: "a road neither straight not crooked, neither level nor hilly, bordered by hedges, trees, and other vegetation" (Hardy 1977, 4). As if the dust covering all things and deadening the walkers' footsteps were also thrown in the reader's eyes, the absence of

clear visual details on the landscape seems to make way for other senses than sight (here, for hearing), allowing "every extraneous sound to be heard" (4).

Windows: framing devices and mediators of the gaze and of desire

19 The first lines display an interest in complex ways of seeing as much as in the things that are seen. Windows are for Hardy another way to stage the act of looking and to play on what is seen and what remains unseen. In his description of the architecture of the buildings of Casterbridge, he mostly focuses on windows (open or closed, with blinds, curtains and shutters, themselves open or closed) which, together with evocations of the exchanges that they create between inside and outside, may be regarded in the light of the association of desire and the eye. These architectural elements enable Hardy to stress the reversibility of the gaze (from inside to outside and vice-versa) and to explore the conditions of visibility, accessibility and inaccessibility, setting down or removing obstacles that might thwart both vision and desire. Curiosity, which very often becomes fascination, accounts for the frequent references to windows in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. For Robert Kiely who has studied vision and viewpoint in this novel which greatly "depends on inquisitiveness", the characters "include some of the busiest amateur spies" (Kiely 197).

20 In chapter 5, the description of the King's Arms Hotel where a public dinner is presided by Henchard is in fact limited to an emphasis on the bow-window of the building, insisting on transparency by mentioning open sashes and unclosed blinds. The function of this bow-window is to give access to the interior and to become a frame that turns into a representation the scene inside, viewed from the outside first by a group of passers-by then by Susan, observing the man that sold her years before: "A spacious bow-window projected into the street over the main portico, and from the open sashes came the babble of voices, the jingle of glasses, and the drawing of corks. The blinds, moreover, being left unclosed, the whole interior of this room could be surveyed from the top of a flight of stone steps to the road-waggon office opposite, for which reason a knot of idlers had gathered there" (Hardy 1977, 25). The banquet is one of the first instances of other similar scenes in which social comedy prevails and the theatricality of public life is stressed, before it finally degenerates into "a masquerade or a puppet show" (Goater 137).

21 Because of their multiple connections with the gaze, windows become emblematic of Hardy's exploration of human relationships based on the desire to see, of the link between the private and the public and they serve to mediate an intricate web of looks. In chapter 6, the description of the bay window of the Three Mariners articulates visibility and invisibility: "The bay window projecting into the street, whose interior was so popular among the frequenters of the inn, was closed with shutters, in each of which appeared a heart-shaped aperture, somewhat more attenuated in the right and left ventricles than is seen in Nature" (Hardy 1977, 32). Contrary to the easy access given to the dinner scene by the bow-window of the first building, it is only through a hole in each shutter that a curious onlooker might view the scene. Besides it is through these heart-shaped holes that Henchard hears Farfrae's singing and realizes his great interest in the young man (who has just refused to work for him as a corn-factor manager), or "how that fellow does draw [him]" (44).

22 It can be noticed that in these two examples, the windows "project" into the street, perhaps a way to illustrate the incursion or even intrusion they allow from inside to outside and vice-versa. Windows serve as frames enclosing the object of desire and enhancing the part played by the gaze in the construction of fascination. For Elizabeth and Lucetta, who are often shown each posted at a window in Lucetta's room compared with a "gazebo" (Hardy 1977, 138), watching the animated scene of the market beneath, the windows frame sights the perception of which combines desire and the eye. While Lucetta is looking for Henchard, the other woman detects the presence of Farfrae behind a tree and, from their facial expressions, the tense exchange of looks between the two men. Lucetta, who remains unaware of the young man's presence (as he is still concealed behind the tree), only becomes conscious of her companion's sigh and asks if she is "particularly interested in anybody out there" (118), which makes Elizabeth Jane blush as she lies and says no. This is only the first stage in the construction of a complex game of looks set as the basis of the "dance of desire" between the characters. When Farfrae pays his first visit to Lucetta, he asks her if she looks out often and then if she looks for anyone in particular. Lucetta's answer, "I look as at a picture merely" (122), is not just a clever evasion (she actually wants to spot Henchard) but also a reminder of the function of the window which, with its frame, turns reality into an image. In the same scene, the enforced separation between two lovers witnessed by Lucetta and Farfrae is like a spectacle that moves them to tears and leads to an exchange of looks and an awareness of their shared emotion: "Lucetta's eyes, full of tears, met Farfrae's. His, too, to her surprise, were moist at the scene" (124).

23 Furthermore, the effects of light produced by the sun coming from outside and steeping Lucetta's room contribute to a dramatization of these fantasies fuelled by looks. Linked with Hardy's interest in Turner and the visual effects produced by "light as modified by objects" (Bullen 198), the "fantastic series of circling irradiations upon the ceiling" (Hardy 1977, 128) of Lucetta's room created by the movement of wheels outside and the sun shining on them attract the women to the window. These circles of light on the ceiling could be considered as images of the irradiations of desire produced by the arrival of the new agricultural machine associated with Farfrae, thus clearly revealing Hardy's play on the connection between windows, gazes and desire. Similarly, when light suddenly fills Lucetta's room (a light sent by the passing of a waggon bearing Farfrae's name and accompanied by its owner), she is transfigured, a change that goes unnoticed by Henchard who focuses on her voice and words and doesn't look at her:

> Lucetta's face became – as a woman's face becomes when the man she loves rises upon her gaze like an apparition.
> A turn of the eye by Henchard, a glance from the window, and the secret of her inaccessibility would have been revealed. But Henchard in estimating her tone was looking down so plumb-straight that he did not note the warm consciousness upon Lucetta's face. (Hardy 1977, 136)

24 Henchard's blindness is both literal and figurative (not observing her face, he is also unable to wonder what might have produced this expression) and is implicitly contrasted with the narrator's ability to decipher manifestations of desire on a face.

25 The evocation in the first pages of Elizabeth-Jane's black eyes closing, opening, then closing again as the baby falls asleep (Hardy 1977, 6), then of Lucetta's "large lustrous

eyes ha[ving] an odd effect upside down" (116) as she reclines on a sofa in a pose evoking a picture by Titian, and eventually the mention of Argus' eyes, the dead monster's hundred eyes set in the tail of Juno's peacock (232), when Henchard, telescope in hand, takes to spying on Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's courtship at the end of the novel, could be regarded as emblems of Hardy's ways of envisaging the gaze. First there is the intermittent blinking that alternates seeing and not seeing; second a focus on eyes and new ways of seeing that turn things upside down, perhaps a hint at the unsettling effects that looks have in this novel; and third the dream of unlimited powers of vision, though here the mythological reference is linked with Elizabeth-Jane's limited perception since she doesn't possess these powers. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the gaze finally has a lethal power, and looking at their effigies or doubles has tragic consequences for Lucetta ("She's me" [214]) and Henchard ("the image o' me!" [228]). A former confrontation with the mirror, another semiotic mediator of images and another frame involving the I/Eye, suggested Lucetta's degradation imagined by Elizabeth-Jane herself, "eyeing her as a critic eyes a doubtful painting" (133). The woman dies from the shock of her encounter with her double, she changes "from the object of fascinated desire to an artwork of dubious value, a debased effigy and finally to a corpse" (Thomas 2013a, 50). Henchard organizes his own erasure, moving from the centre to the margins, "bent upon getting out of sight and sound" (Hardy 1977, 240), an echo of his initial departure after having sold Susan when he seemed to be glad that a dog was "the only positive spectator" (13) of his exit. Hardy narrates the degradation of fascination into destruction, the lethal force of the eye being best summed up in this passage from *As You Like It*, an intertextual reference that stages (though in a playful and comic way) the dance of desire and its connection with the eye:

> Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye:
> 'Tis pretty, sure, and very probable
> That eyes, that are the frail'st and softest things,
> Who shut their coward gates on atomies,
> Should be called tyrants, butchers, murderers! (Shakespeare III, 5, 10-14)

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ABSTRACTS

Starting from J. Hillis Miller's work on distance and desire as two of the "outlining threads" of Hardy's work, this paper aims at exploring the emphasis on complex ways of seeing in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and their connection with the theme of fascination. These ways of seeing range from the association between desire and the gaze, which shapes the feelings of the protagonists and organizes the intricate "dance of desire" in which they participate, to the "verbal-visual effects" (Bullen) that remind us of the influence of painting on Hardy's writing. This study examines the role of the gaze and of the play on focalisation and pictorial effects in the expression of desire. It begins with first encounters and the way the visual exchanges that then take place generate fascination, before focusing on characters who watch from a distance and become readers of the manifestations of desire in the others' looks and faces. The link between desire and the gaze is also found in the writing itself, through the presence of visual details that saturate the text and that may be envisaged as a manifestation of a desire for the visible. There is in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* an image-making process which the pictorial characteristics of the writing and the outstanding function of windows illustrate.

Prenant pour point de départ l'étude de J. Hillis Miller qui fait de la distance et du désir deux des fils conducteurs de l'œuvre de Hardy, cet article s'attache à explorer l'accent mis sur des modalités complexes du voir dans *The Mayor of Casterbridge* en lien avec le thème de la fascination. Ces modalités du voir vont de l'association entre le désir et le regard, qui façonne les sentiments des protagonistes et organise les circonvolutions de la danse du désir à laquelle ils participent, aux « verbal-visual effects » (Bullen) qui rappellent l'influence de la peinture sur l'écriture de Hardy. Cette analyse porte sur le rôle du regard et du jeu sur la focalisation et sur les effets picturaux dans l'expression du désir. Elle débute par les premières rencontres et la manière dont les échanges visuels qui ont alors lieu engendre la fascination, elle se concentre aussi sur les personnages qui observent à distance et deviennent les lecteurs des manifestations du désir sur le visage et dans le regard des autres. Le lien entre le désir et le regard est également exprimé dans l'écriture même, par la présence de détails visuels qui saturent le texte et qui

peuvent être envisagés comme la manifestation d'un désir pour le visible. Il y a dans *The Mayor of Casterbridge* un processus de faire-image que les caractéristiques picturales de l'écriture et la fonction majeure des fenêtres illustrent.

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oeuvrecitee Mayor of Casterbridge (The)
Keywords: desire, gaze, fascination, first encounter, pictorial, window
Mots-clés: désir, regard, fascination, première rencontre, pictural, fenêtre

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